ABBA The Singles

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

In May 1972 a modestly packaged single by a brand new group appeared in Swedish record shops. This disc, featuring two boys and two girls, was 'People Need Love': the first ABBA single – or rather, the first disc issued by Björn & Benny, Agnetha & Anni-Frid. It would take well over a year before they finally settled on the name by which the group would be known when it conquered the world.

The four members were individually well-known in Sweden at the time, and successful in their separate endeavours. Björn and Benny were an established songwriting team, and romantically involved with the two women – Björn with Agnetha, Benny with Anni-Frid – so this first single was a matter of dipping the toe in the water to see if this combination could be successful as a quartet, recording English-language pop music.

And the 'People Need Love' single was successful. This cheerful singalong-style paean to harmony between people – with a bit of yodelling thrown in towards the end – was perfect for the times. It wasn't a number one smash of the kind we would come to expect of ABBA, but it appeared on two important charts in Sweden at the time. Also, the group's diligent manager, Stig Anderson, used all his international music business contacts to get the single released in several countries across the world. The domestic and international success, such as it was, was enough for the four friends to decide on making more records together, hoping that their seemingly impossible dreams of reaching outside Sweden with their music would come true. 'People Need Love' was just the first in one of the most extraordinary strings of pop singles ever issued.

This collection, celebrating 50 years of ABBA single releases, brings together, for the first time, all 34 English-language singles issued by ABBA's Swedish record label Polar Music in Scandinavia (including the digital-only 'No Doubt About It'). It also includes a handful of well-loved tracks that were only single A-sides in a select few countries. The singles in themselves constitute a journey through the ABBA story, touching on all the milestones in their extraordinary career.

The modest beginnings of 'People Need Love' were followed by the groundbreaking 'Ring Ring', which not only introduced the famous, multi-layered ABBA sound, but was also the biggest hit in Sweden in 1973: its success finally convinced Björn, Benny, Agnetha and Anni-Frid to phase out whatever else they were doing and concentrate fully on the group.

The next and perhaps most important milestone was 'Waterloo', ABBA's take on glam rock, which won the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest and gave the group an international breakthrough. After a slump in the UK, where the group were regarded as Eurovision has-beens, 1975's melancholy 'SOS' was the single that brought them back to the upper region of the charts, its sheer production values also convincing the world's music journalists that this was a group worth taking seriously.

The rousing 'Mamma Mia' started the Australian phenomenon that came to be known as Abbamania, when it topped the charts for 10 consecutive weeks. It was even bettered in 1976, when 'Fernando', one of those songs that appealed to all generations, spent an almost incomprehensible 14 weeks at the top of the Australian charts, equalling the record set by The Beatles' 'Hey Jude'. When 'Dancing Queen' was released later the same year, going to number one on the charts almost everywhere, it symbolised how ABBA were now the world's biggest pop group. To this day, 'Dancing Queen' entices people out on the dancefloor and has become the group's signature tune.

With the wistful 'Knowing Me, Knowing You', ABBA showed that they were able to tap into truly grown-up emotions. This was further developed by singles from 1977's ABBA – The Album such as the complexly structured 'The Name Of The Game' and the tribute to freedom that was 'Eagle', showing how far they'd come from their Eurovision beginnings in just a few years.

The years of 1978 and 1979 were very much marked by the influence of disco music on ABBA. Singles such as 'Summer Night City', 'Does Your Mother Know', 'Voulez-Vous' and 'Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight)' paid tribute to big city nightlife, but also captured the restlessness, even desperation, of that scene. They bookended their foray into floor filling dance music with the electronic masterpiece 'Lay All Your Love On Me', issued as a single in 1981.

In the midst of all this, ABBA's determination to offer variation in their musical output meant that they also put out singles like the comforting ballad 'Chiquitita'. A large portion of the royalties from that song have benefited UNICEF since it was released in January 1979, and the song also gave the group an extraordinary breakthrough in Latin America. On a similar tangent, ABBA rounded off 1979 with the release of 'I Have A Dream', a song, children's choir and all, that highlighted the group's affinity with the European popular music they grew up with in the 1950s.

For ABBA, their singles of the early 1980s very much mirrored the upheavals within the group, as they tackled the consequences of romantic relationships reaching their end. In 1980, 'The Winner Takes It All' had particular personal resonance for Björn and Agnetha: Björn wrote the lyrics, Agnetha sang them. But although neither of them thought the words were a literal depiction of what had happened to them, they both recognised an emotional truth in the song, and so did music fans the world over. In 1981, 'One Of Us' continued this theme of depicting the vagaries of marital splits, perhaps even more powerfully so in 'When All Is Said And Done' the same year; sung by Anni-Frid, its lyrics were directly triggered by Benny and Anni-Frid going their separate ways.

'Super Trouper', from 1980, ostensibly a straightforward pop song, subtly let the world know that ABBA were not so keen on touring, and indeed, after a final trek to Japan that year, they never went on tour again. Before the end of 1982, ABBA had released what many thought would be their final singles. In hindsight, the low-key tone of the compelling 'The Day Before You Came' seemed to have an underlying message: we're no longer the group that gave you 'Mamma Mia' and we might not be around much longer. Maybe, the ABBA members thought, we have reached the end of the line as to what we can accomplish together. After one final single, 'Under Attack', Agnetha, Björn, Benny and Anni-Frid decided to take a break from the group.

That break, which seemed to be indefinite, was ended in 2021, when ABBA released the Voyage album – their first new music in 39 years. It was certainly the longest break any popular music act has ever taken. The first two singles, the ballad 'I Still Have Faith In You', reflecting on the group's history, and the more up-tempo 'Don't Shut Me Down', were instant hits, proving that ABBA could still capture a pop music audience. Among the other singles from the album was the Christmas release 'Little Things', which nicely pointed back to 'Chiquitita' when the group donated its royalties to UNICEF.

This voyage through ABBA's singles concludes with the rocker 'No Doubt About It', issued in 2022, exactly 50 years after the release of 'People Need Love'. 'No Doubt About It' concludes with the line "this isn't where it ends", and although ABBA may never again release any new music, the impact of the group and the love for the songs they have already given us will never end.

Carl Magnus Palm
May, 2024

ABBA ALBUM 1

1972-1976

SIDE A

1 / PEOPLE NEED LOVE
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1972 Polar Music International AB
Released in May 1972.

2 / HE IS YOUR BROTHER
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1972 Polar Music International AB
Released in November 1972.

3 / RING RING
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus, N. Sedaka, P. Cody)
℗ 1973 Polar Music International AB
Released in February 1973.

4 / LOVE ISN'T EASY (BUT IT SURE IS HARD ENOUGH)
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1973 Polar Music International AB
Released in June 1973.

5 / WATERLOO
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1974 Polar Music International AB
Released in March 1974.

6 / HONEY, HONEY
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1974 Polar Music International AB
Released in June 1974.

SIDE B

1 / HASTA MAÑANA
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1974 Polar Music International AB
Released in October 1974.

2 / SO LONG
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1974 Polar Music International AB
Released in November 1974.

3 / I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1975 Polar Music International AB
Released in April 1975.

4 / SOS
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1975 Polar Music International AB
Released in June 1975.

5 / MAMMA MIA
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1975 Polar Music International AB
Released in September 1975.

6 / FERNANDO
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1976 Polar Music International AB
Released in March 1976.

Photo by Torbjörn Calvero

Photo by Barry Levine

Photo by Barry Levine

Photo by Bror Augustsson

ALBUM 2

1976-1979

SIDE A

1 / DANCING QUEEN
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1976 Polar Music International AB
Released in August 1976.

2 / MONEY, MONEY, MONEY
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1976 Polar Music International AB
Released in November 1976.

3 / KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1977 Polar Music International AB
Released in February 1977.

4 / THE NAME OF THE GAME
(B. Andersson, S. Anderson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1977 Polar Music International AB
Released in October 1977.

5 / TAKE A CHANCE ON ME
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1977 Polar Music International AB
Released in January 1978.

SIDE B

1 / EAGLE
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1977 Polar Music International AB
Released in May 1978.

2 / SUMMER NIGHT CITY
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1978 Polar Music International AB
Released in September 1978.

3 / CHIQUITITA
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1979 Polar Music International AB
Released in January 1979.

4 / DOES YOUR MOTHER KNOW
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1979 Polar Music International AB
Released in April 1979.

Photo by Barry Levine

Photo by Torbjörn Calveto

Photo by Barry Levine

Photo by Barry Levine

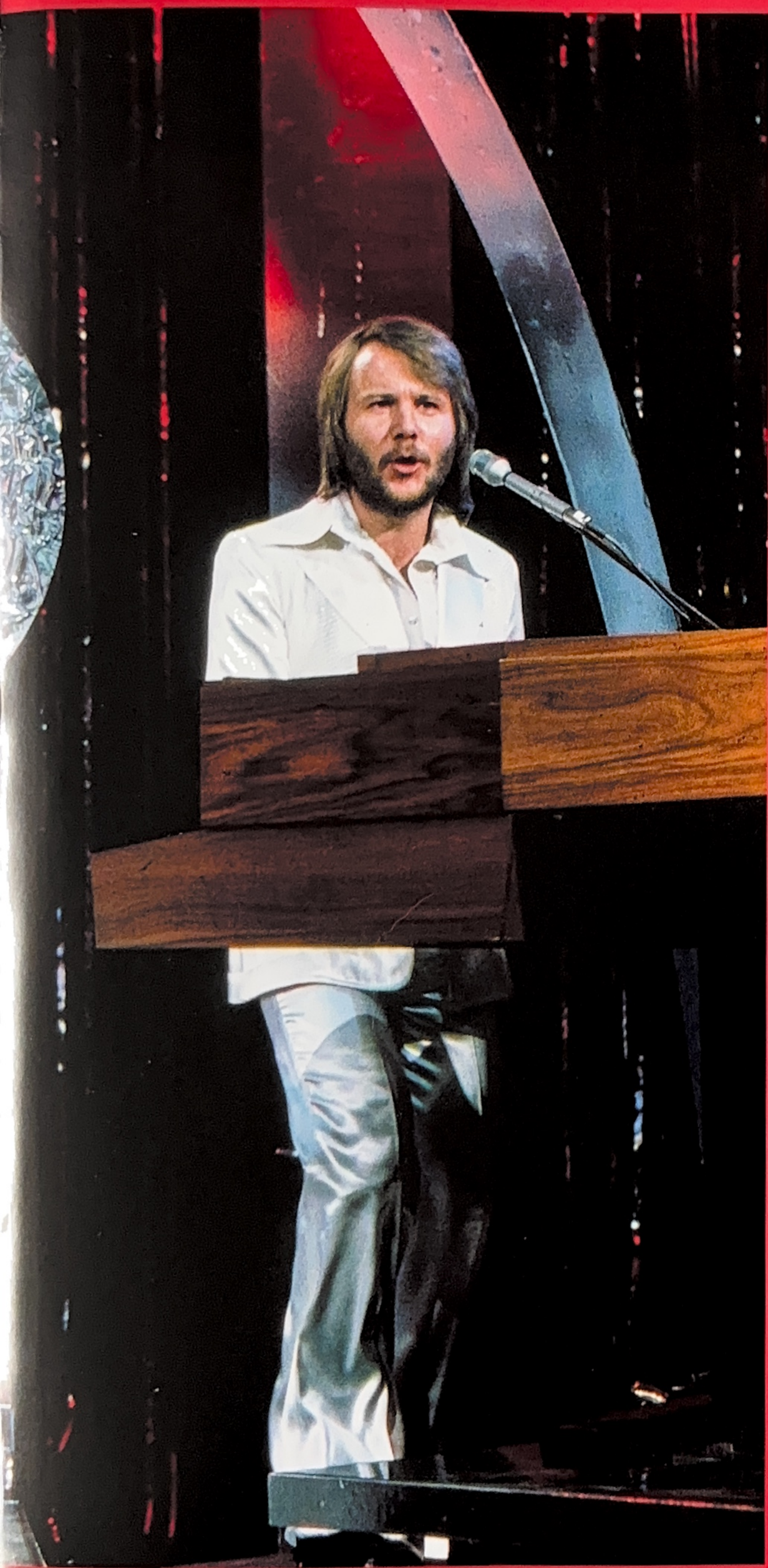


Photo by Anders Hanser

ALBUM 3

1979-1981

SIDE A

1 / VOULEZ-VOUS
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1979 Polar Music International AB
Released in July 1979.

2 / ANGELEYES
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1979 Polar Music International AB
Released in July 1979.

3 / GIMME! GIMME! GIMME! (A MAN AFTER MIDNIGHT)
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1979 Polar Music International AB
Released in October 1979.

4 / I HAVE A DREAM
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1979 Polar Music International AB
Released in December 1979.

SIDE B

1 / THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1980 Polar Music International AB
Released in July 1980.

2 / SUPER TROUPER
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1980 Polar Music International AB
Released in November 1980.

3 / LAY ALL YOUR LOVE ON ME
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1980 Polar Music International AB
Released in July 1981.

4 / ONE OF US
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1981 Polar Music International AB
Released in December 1981.

Photo by Torbjörn Calvero

Photo by Torbjörn Calvero

Photo by Barry Levine

Photo by Barry Levine

ALBUM 4

1981-2022

SIDE A

1 / HEAD OVER HEELS
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1981 Polar Music International AB
Released in March 1982.

2 / WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1981 Polar Music International AB
Released in December 1981.

3 / THE DAY BEFORE YOU CAME
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1982 Polar Music International AB
Released in October 1982.

4 / UNDER ATTACK
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 1982 Polar Music International AB
Released in December 1982.

SIDE B

1 / I STILL HAVE FAITH IN YOU
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 2021 1221 AB, under exclusive license
to Polar Music International AB
Released in September 2021.

2 / DON'T SHUT ME DOWN
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 2021 1221 AB, under exclusive license
to Polar Music International AB
Released in September 2021.

3 / JUST A NOTION
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 2021 1221 AB, under exclusive license
to Polar Music International AB
Released in October 2021.

4 / LITTLE THINGS
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 2021 1221 AB, under exclusive license
to Polar Music International AB
Released in December 2021.

5 / NO DOUBT ABOUT IT
(B. Andersson, B. Ulvaeus)
℗ 2021 1221 AB, under exclusive license
to Polar Music International AB
Released to radio in February 2022.

Photo by Torbjörn Calvero

Photo by Barry Levine

Photo by Torbjörn Calvero

Photo by Barry Levine

Photo by Barry Levine

All songs produced by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus.
Engineered by Michael B. Tretow except Album 4 side B by Bernard Löhr.
All songs published by Universal/Union Songs AB.

This box mastered by: Miles Showell at Abbey Road Studios.
Linernotes by Carl Magnus Palm. Cover photo by Bengt H. Malmqvist © Premium Rockshot.
Art direction by Bixbite. Project co-ordinated by Mia Segolsson with thanks to Johan Funemyr.

BJÖRN & BENNY
AGNETHA & ANNI-FRID
PEOPLE NEED LOVE
MERRY-GO-ROUND (EN KARUSELL)

HASTA MAÑANA

ABBA

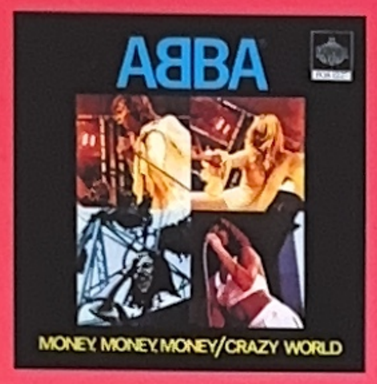
ABBA
SUMMER NIGHT CITY

ABBA
THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL · ELAINE

THE DAY BEFORE YOU CAME
CASSANDRA
ABBA

BJÖRN & BENNY
AGNETHA & ANNI-FRID
HE IS YOUR BROTHER
SANTA ROSA

SO LONG


ABBA
MONEY, MONEY, MONEY/CRAZY WORLD

Chiquitita c/w Lovelight
ABBA

ABBA
SUPER TROUPER / THE PIPER

ABBA

POLAR

ABBA
I DO,
I DO,
I DO,
I DO,
I DO

KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU
HAPPY HAWAII (Early version of Why Did It Have To Be Me)
ABBA

Does Your Mother Know
Kisses Of Fire
From the New Album Voulez-Vous.
ABBA

ABBA
LAY ALL YOUR LOVE ON ME
EXCLUSIVE COLLECTOR'S ITEM

Björn Benny & Agnetha Frida
LOVE ISN'T EASY
I AM JUST A GIRL

ABBA
SOS

THE NAME OF THE GAME/I WONDER (Departure)
ABBA

Voulez-Vous/Angeleyes
ABBA

ABBA
One Of Us
Should I Laugh Or Cry

ABBA
WATERLOO

ABBA
MAMMA MIA

ABBA
TAKE A CHANCE ON ME
I'M A MARIONETTE

GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!
ABBA

ABBA

ABBA
Just A Notion

ABBA
HONEY HONEY

Fernando★ABBA

ABBA
Eagle/Thank You For The Music

ABBA
I HAVE A DREAM
TAKE A CHANCE ON ME

ABBA
When All Is Said And Done
B/W Soldiers

ABBA

00602465776379